



How to Communicate with Your Teen About Drinking



Research shows that teens that have strong parental support and involvement are less likely to use alcohol. Parental support encompasses monitoring teen's activities while supporting their independence and setting limits; it also includes having good communication.

Communication Tips:

- **Encourage conversation and keep talking about it.** It is important for parents to talk to their teens about everything. Try having an open conversation with your teen about alcohol and don't forget to listen. Bringing up the subject of alcohol with your teen sends the message that underage drinking is a big deal.
- **Educate yourself and your teen.** Before you start a conversation with your child about alcohol/drinking make sure you have the facts and can answer questions that may arise as well as introduce new information to your teen.
- **State your rules clearly. Spell out the consequences. Be consistent.** Let your child know that it is unacceptable to drink under the age of 21 and don't forget to inform her/him of the consequences if they are caught drinking (both legal and home consequences). If your teen is caught drinking, make sure you follow through and enforce the appropriate consequences.
- **Know your child's friends and their parents.** Never underestimated the power of peer influence. You want to make sure your teen is forming healthy friendships. Even if you have strict rules at your own house, you don't know what goes on at your child's friends' houses; getting to know the parents of your teen's friends keeps you in the loop.
- **Don't condone drinking, but have a plan in case it happens.** Sometimes your teen may still decide to drink, even though you have made it clear that underage drinking is inappropriate behavior. You want your teen to know that it is okay if s/he calls you for ride home if s/he has been drinking. The last thing you want is for your teen to be so afraid of getting in trouble that s/he takes a ride home from someone who has been drinking.
- **Practice what you preach.** Modeling responsible drinking behavior (i.e. not drinking in excess and not drinking and driving) is one of the best ways to educate your child about alcohol. Show your teen that you can have fun without drinking.



Questions to Ask Your Teen:

- What are your future goals? How would drinking alcohol get in the way of your future goals?
- What do you know about drinking? Alcohol? How did you find this out?
- What would you do if you were offered alcohol at a party?
- What would you do if you find yourself at a party with only alcohol to drink?
- What would you do if a friend of yours passed out from drinking too much alcohol?
- What would you do if your friends wanted or were pressuring you to drink? Would you still consider them your friends?
- What would you really like to ask me but are too afraid to talk about?

